

Review #21 : *Unfaithfully Yours* (1948)

Rex Harrison and Linda Darnell

TRAILER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq6kgy-chlk>



SYNOPSIS

Unfaithfully Yours is a **sardonic slapstick comedy**. It has wit in its charming off-hand touches. Here is the storyline. The hero is a great **symphonic maestro** who suddenly and darkly suspects that his beautiful wife, for whom he is passionate, has been unfaithful to him. And so one night, while conducting a concert before a mob of ermined swells, his thoughts turn to various revenges which he will take when he goes home that night. While conducting Rossini's *Semiramide*, he visions a beautifully suave way to murder his wife and then plant it

upon the man he suspects. In the midst of Wagner's *Venusberg* music, he sees himself being magnanimous and calm, surrendering his wife to her lover with brave words and a check for a huge sum. And finally, while tearing out the overture of Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini*, he has the romantic notion of a suicide gamble with his rival for his wife. At the end of the film, he attempts to carry out the first idea, with results are far from successful, but great for fun +++



REVIEW

Preston Sturges' symphonic gent is not the conventional maestro. He is a charmingly wry and fluid chap, with a great many obvious human failings, which Rex Harrison deliciously displays. So maybe he doesn't serve exactly as a prototype for satire. But he makes a most pleasantly diverting personality in a Sturges farce. So, too, does Linda Darnell as the orchestra leader's lovely wife.

A word should be said for the music — which some may overlook in paying too rapt attention to the developments of the farce. It is fully and richly presented in fine symphonic style. The idea of using it to background movie cut-ups is a true revelation.



It may not be top Sturges but it still is a cheerful entertainment. It is the work of an agile and adult mind. If his humour escapes some people, that is too bad for them...

Hard to think of many comedies many films full stop, in fact **with structure so brilliant and original** as *Unfaithfully Yours*. Very easy to forgive some glaring faults : slow music-heavy stretches early on ; thin story and slightly limp finale. None of this really matters once the film suddenly clicks into place. Bloody murder, martyred resignation and desperate suicide are all three visualised with brilliantly stylish imagination. Harrison triumphs : equally good at George Sanders-style acerbic putdowns *and* at slapstick. Sidesplitting highlight is his tangle with a recording machine – part of his fiendish homicide plot – which proves less than straightforward to operate : and that's even before he checks the diagram on page 6 LOL ^^ The last of Sturges's Hollywood films, and one of his finest +++

'A thousand poets dreamed a thousand years. Then you were born, my love'.